

### AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows.

1. (Currently Amended) A method of mounting a retaining ring on a rotating electric starter shaft of an electric starter drive assembly, wherein the electric starter drive assembly comprises:  
a reducing gear coupled to the shaft and comprising a protuberance,  
wherein the starter drive assembly comprises:  
     a bushing and a pinion to drive a toothed ring of an internal combustion engine, and  
         that includes  
     a self-disengaging coupling device acting between [[a]] the bushing and [[a]] the  
         pinion and interposed axially between the reducing gear and the pinion, the  
         bushing and the shaft which penetrates inside the bushing having splines that  
         cooperate,  
the shaft having a wherein the retaining ring is a [[first]] rear stop arranged on the shaft, and  
     wherein the shaft comprises a second front stop, the front and rear stops being spaced  
     apart thereon to define a course along which the starter drive assembly slides  
     between a rest and a working position of the pinion, while being engaged on the  
     toothed ring, said first rear stop being formed by elastic retaining ring inserted into  
     an annular positioning groove of the shaft  
an angular positioning channel provided on a rear end of the shaft for insertion of the  
     retaining ring which forms the rear stop,  
wherein the electric starter drive assembly comprising the pinion, the self-disengaging  
     coupling device, and the reducing gear is introduced in a housing of an electric  
     starter, after the retaining ring is placed in the positioning channel, starting from a  
     configuration in which the positioning channel is recessed from the protuberance of  
     the reducing gear in a service area with no radial access,  
 the method comprising:

mounting the retaining ring radially on an axial segment of the shaft with a progressive cross-section situated in a radial fitting area in an accessible mounting area between the positioning groove and the splines; and  
moving the starter drive assembly axially toward the rest position so as to move the retaining ring along the axial segment of the shaft to the positioning groove, which is located in a service area with no radial access.

2. (Previously Presented) The mounting method according to claim 1, wherein the service area is disposed beneath a protrusion of a speed reducer.
3. (Previously Presented) The mounting method according to claim 1, wherein a shaft segment with a cross section that increases toward the positioning groove is used.
4. – 10. (Canceled)
11. (Currently Amended) The mounting method according to claim 3, wherein a diameter of the shaft is close or equal to a diameter acceptable by the retaining ring without elastic deformation of the retaining ring, wherein the diameter acceptable by the retaining ring is one that is less than or equal to a diameter of the positioning channel.
12. (Previously Presented) The mounting method according to claim 2, wherein the service area is disposed beneath a plurality of protrusions, wherein at least one protrusion is shorter than other protrusions of the plurality of protrusions.